

Welcome to the 56<sup>th</sup> issue of Ibbetson Street. On the front cover is art by Emma Kalff, titled “Portrait of Julia”, and on the back cover is a photograph by the talented Denise Provost. In this issue you will find poetry by Mary Buchinger Bodwell, Gary Metras, Hilary Sallick, Dennis Daly, Susan Donnelly, Deborah Szabo, Denise Provost, William Snyder, Miriam Levine, Robert K. Johnson and many other outstanding poets, as well as an interview conducted by yours truly with the vastly talented poet Heather Treseler.

We would like to thank our poetry editor Harris Gardner, and our managing editor/designer Steve Glines for putting together another fine issue .

The Ibbetson Street/Endicott College Young Writers Series is still going strong, and we plan to have a new title out by the first of the year. Our new director of the series is former Endicott student Gianna Tretton.

We would like to thank Endicott College for their continued support. Professors Dan Sklar, Sam Alexander and Mark Herlihy have been instrumental for our success at Endicott College.

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# **CONTENTS**

<b><i>A NOTE FROM DOUG HOLDER</i></b> —.....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>CUL-DE-SAC</i></b> —.....	<b>3</b>
— Heather Treseler	
<b><i>TRAITOR!</i></b> —.....	<b>4</b>
— Llyn Clague	
<b><i>MAY 24, 2022 – ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, UVALDE TEXAS</i></b> —.....	<b>5</b>
— Elizabeth S. Wolf	
<b><i>HOMELESS IN BOSTON</i></b> —.....	<b>6</b>
— Zvi A. Sesling	
<b><i>RECKONING</i></b> —.....	<b>6</b>
— Molly Mattfield Bennett	
<b><i>A FUGUE IN GREY</i></b> —.....	<b>7</b>
— Robert K. Johnson	
<b><i>GRIM REAPER</i></b> —.....	<b>7</b>
— Claire Scott	
<b><i>IN A CITY OF GREY OBJECTS</i></b> —.....	<b>7</b>
— Mary Buchinger	
<b><i>WE WON'T GO BACK</i></b> —.....	<b>8</b>
— Charles Coe	
<b><i>BAD DREAM</i></b> —.....	<b>8</b>
— Joyce Wilson	
<b><i>EXIT GHOSTS</i></b> —.....	<b>9</b>
— Theodore Wachs	
<b><i>I SEE NO STAR</i></b> —.....	<b>9</b>
— Jeffery Allen Tobin	
<b><i>PET RAVEN</i></b> —.....	<b>10</b>
— Chad Parenteau	
<b><i>SHADOW LIFE</i></b> —.....	<b>10</b>
— Ruth C. Chad	
<b><i>BLASTED OAK</i></b> ..... –.....	<b>10</b>
— David Sapp	
<b><i>READING RILKE, AGAIN</i></b> —.....	<b>11</b>
— Gary Metras	
<b><i>JUST SITTING</i></b> —.....	<b>11</b>
— Ellie O’Leary	
<b><i>THE PIANO LESSON</i></b> —.....	<b>11</b>
— Fran Schumer	
<b><i>COVID MONKS</i></b> —.....	<b>12</b>
— Ed Meek	
<b><i>TIR NA NOG</i></b> —.....	<b>12</b>
— Dennis Daly	
<b><i>LOGOS</i></b> —.....	<b>13</b>
— Danielle Legros Georges	

<b>TO MY SKI TRAIL—</b>	<b>13</b>
— Carla Schwartz	
<b>WAITING FOR OCTOBER—</b>	<b>14</b>
— Karen Klein	
<b>WOMEN’S COLLEGE REUNION—</b>	<b>14</b>
— Miriam Manglani	
<b>GRANDPA EAGLE—</b>	<b>14</b>
— E Kraft	
<b>CHARLES RIVER VILLANELLE—</b>	<b>15</b>
— Priscilla Turner Spada	
<b>SEEING STARS—</b>	<b>15</b>
— Peter Mladinic	
<b>RENEWED—</b>	<b>15</b>
— Keith Tornheim	
<b>LAST LEAVES—</b>	<b>16</b>
— Miriam Levine	
<b>BEAUTY AND THE BEAST—</b>	<b>17</b>
— Ann Christine Tabaka	
<b>HOOK AND EYE—</b>	<b>17</b>
— Ted Kooser	
<b>NIGHT STALKERS—</b>	<b>17</b>
— W. D. Ehrhart	
<b>DATING PAST SIXTY—</b>	<b>18</b>
— Myles Gordon	
<b>PREDICAMENT OF THE TRAILING SPOUSE—</b>	<b>21</b>
— Denise Provost	
<b>TRYST—</b>	<b>21</b>
— Tanya Contos	
<b>MY NAME IS HARDY—</b>	<b>22</b>
— Zara Raab	
<b>PRODITE POETICA—</b>	<b>22</b>
— Harris Gardner	
<b>SHHH, NOT TOO LOUD NOW—</b>	<b>23</b>
— Marge Piercy	
<b>THINGS: YARD-SALE KARMA—</b>	<b>23</b>
— Nina Rubinstein Alonso	
<b>SCAMANDER (THE RIVER GOD)—</b>	<b>24</b>
— Ryan B. Clinesmith Montalvo	
<b>THE LOST FROST SPIRIT—</b>	<b>25</b>
— Deborah Szabo	
<b>THERE’S NOTHING TO EXPLAIN, THERE’S ONLY SOMETHING TO DESCRIBE—</b>	<b>26</b>
— Hilary Sallick	
<b>THE VIEW FROM THE 10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR—</b>	<b>26</b>
— Susan Donnelly	

<b>LOST IN FINDERS TOWN</b> —	27
— Tomas O’Leary	
<b>ON BEING GIVEN A MING DYNASTY SCROLL PAINTING—</b>	
<b>BY A DEPARTING FRIEND</b> —	27
— Ruth Holzer	
<b>SELF PORTRAIT AS A LUTE PLAYER</b> —	28
— William Snyder	
<b>LEVITATE</b> —	30
— Eric Jason Silverman	
<b>BEGINNING WITH ELIOT</b> —	31
— Mark Fleckensyein	
<b>FOR ALL OTHER INQUIRIES, PLEASE PRESS 2</b> —	31
— Allen Seward	
<b>SPEAK</b> —	32
— Michael Brosnan	
<b>THE 80S</b> —	34
— Michael Todd Steffen	
<b>SAWDUST</b> —	35
— Paulette Demers Turco	
<b>AWAITING YOU</b> —	36
— Lorraine Caputo	
<b>INSIDE THE RAIN</b> —	36
— Judy Brackett Crowe	
<b>WRITERS’ BIOGRAPHIES</b> —	37



## **A NOTE FROM DOUG HOLDER**

I have been a Board Member of the New England Poetry Club for a few years now; and I remember judging our Motton Book Prize with other board members. When we came to discuss Heather Treseler's poetry collection, "Auguries & Divinations" there was a hands down love for the book. We were impressed with her facility with language, the music of her work and the deep layers of the lines in this insightful new collection. So after she won the Award, I decided to interview the author, and she generously agreed.



### **From her website:**

"Auguries & Divinations tracks a young woman's coming of age, attuned to the unspoken liabilities in women's lives, the suburban underworld, and the energies of eros. An older woman becomes the narrator's Beatrice in love and survival, and she returns to the New England of her childhood ready to claim a life of her own making, drawing on the classical practice of augury, or observing birds to discern human fate.

Auguries & Divinations received the 2023 May Sarton New Hampshire Poetry Prize (Bauhan), and the 2024 Shelia Margaret Motton Book Award from the New England Poetry Club. It's been reviewed in the [Boston Globe](#), the [Poetry Foundation](#), [LitHub](#), [On the Seawall](#), [Solstice Literary Magazine](#), and [Worcester Magazine](#), and it's available directly from Bauhan and at many independent bookstores."

*Your poetry explores "the suburban underworld." I remember an image from the movie "Blue Velvet" by David Lynch. Lynch pans on the broad lawns of suburbia, and then goes below them, to show us the savagery of insects, etc., below the benign green carpet. Do you feel in some way you are doing the same thing?*

I hadn't thought of that before, but I think the David Lynch analogy is a very canny one.

I am interested in the suburbs as a material enactment of American ideals—pastoral, economic, familial, and social—and as a geography in which appearances and realities often collide. I was ten years old when my family moved from a triple decker in Hyde Park to a rundown Victorian in an upper-class suburb. We were outsiders, strivers, and as a newcomer (and later as a neighborhood babysitter), I started picking up on notes of disorder beneath rigorously maintained surfaces, the human complexities and unmet hungers behind façades of contentment and domestic tranquility.

As an adolescent, I felt like an amateur anthropologist, observing the lives around me, particularly the lives of girls and women, and I was discomforted by some of the compromises and even privations and wrongdoing that I saw. The suburbs enact an ethos of privacy, property, and propriety, but also surveillance, exclusion, and exploitation, which can serve to hide shocking goings-on. I was interested in the wildness that persisted underneath all that orderliness, and I felt I had to understand that tension if I was going to construct a life that met my hungers and desire for certain kinds of freedom.

*An older woman, Lucie, becomes a guide for your narrator—a sort of Beatrice in Dante’s Divine Comedy. Why did you choose to have a guide or mentor to traverse the narrator through the rocky shoals of your old neighborhood?*

“The Lucie Odes” are about an historical person: the second section of the book details a narrator’s friendship with Lucie Nell Beaudet (1960-2018) in St. Louis, Missouri, while the narrator is in graduate school and, in other important ways, acquiring her life education. Lucie, who enacted a “Great Gatsby” climb in her life from an early abusive marriage and a terrible car wreck to a life of professional attainment, friendship, and fulfillment, shows the narrator—through her love and guidance—a path to her own agency and freedom.

*You use birds in some of your poems. Birds are frequently used as symbols in art to express human-animal connection; human hopes; spiritual beliefs; and wealth, power and colonialism, and extinction. Their use as symbols can be seen in the earliest known art (the Lascaux Caves), and their use as symbols persists to the present moment. There was a harrowing poem about a hawk devouring another bird, or a heron snapping up a sun-dazed fish, etc. I think you embrace the beauty and ugliness of nature, and ourselves. Your take?*

The “auguries” in my book title refers to the ancient Roman practice of making important political decisions—about the timing of battles, elections, and state proceedings—in connection with priests’ interpretations of birds in flight, their appearance in certain regions of the sky, their wings’ speed and noise, their feeding patterns, and even the appearance of avian entrails. Consulting natural signs to discern human fate seemed a good metaphor for the narrator’s search for insight into the truer nature of her surroundings.

I’ve also always loved Geoffrey Chaucer’s Parliament of Fowls in which Nature defends a female eagle (or formel)’s right to choose (or abstain from choosing) a mate, upholding free will in the harmonious conduct of life, as well as the humorous role of the pet sparrow in Catullus’s love poems for Clodia.

So yes, the birds in *Auguries & Divinations* are polyvalent symbols for the realities of appetite and survival but also of pleasure, free will, and dialects of song.

*You won the New England Poetry Club’s Motton Book Award. You have had any number of honors—what is special about this award?*

The New England Poetry Club is one of the oldest, most active organizations of its kind. Since *Auguries & Divinations* is a coming-of-age collection set here in New England, it’s a special honor to have it recognized in its place of origin by a civic organization that has advocated for the work of New England poets for over a century.

Why should we read your book?

I am not sure anyone should read my book, but I hope those that do might find it pleasurable: that it rewards their attention with stories and images they find useful and moving; that it might help them see the landscape of everyday life in new ways. I don’t know that a poet can hope for more than that.

## **CUL-DE-SAC**

That old rage for order. How father drove a square-mouthed mower over-and-back, over-and-back, each row of neatly trimmed grass cut just like he told his barber, boy's short, regular. O pioneer, taming this joke-bit of prairie, no bindweed or dog shit on his verdure. Mother, meanwhile, absolved counters of crumbs, paired two dozen socks to matching mates, hummed some half-remembered Sinatra song as she dusted the porcelain figurines and never used, quaintly painted china plates. In the antic business of having nice things, an obligation of display, a furnishing. Each squat house in our street's orb eyed the others, envious of another's paint job, carport, or owner. Left alone, I built model planes with torn-pocket parachutes. Rode a blue scooter in dizzying loops of the prescribed circle. Adults acted as if living here were preferred or exalted. But I had looked it up: I knew it meant bottom of the sack, the fate of drowned cats, a sickly child or rabbit. Gathered up, held head-down in a satchel or bucket. When the hands closed in, I'd make a run for it

– *Heather Treseler*

## **TRAITOR!**

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

The Supreme Court of the United States  
betrayed no military secrets,  
no Code Reds or CIA black sites,  
funded no enemies or assassins,  
sold no nuclear formula (for which  
Ethel and Julius went to the chair).

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

SCOTUS betrayed something  
neither secret nor secure,  
not treasures of classification  
Fort Knoxed like gold bars by DHS,  
not keys to some first strike strategy,  
not privileged Presidential conversations.

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

Betrayed the one thing core  
to the foundation of our new Nation  
and the ongoing quarter-millennium  
American experiment, and experience:  
its premise, and promise,  
that before the law, all men are equal.

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

Betrayed bedrock of the Revolution,  
a principal purpose of the Founders,  
explicit, implicit, and symbolic –  
denying one man unlimited power,  
demanding that no man, called king  
or whatever, be above the law.

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

And so, in *Trump v United States*,  
betrayed, not the US, but *America*,  
by creating, out of thin air, a law-free sphere  
of immunity from prosecution –  
permission, even incitement, to break the law  
by the one most supposed to uphold it.

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

The United States – the country,  
legal entity, physical reality –  
will survive this treachery,  
and possibly thrive. *America*,  
the spirit, the only forever,  
is damaged beyond recovery.

*There is no way to sugarcoat this.  
SCOTUS is a traitor to America.*

– Llyn Clague

**MAY 24, 2022**  
**ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,**  
**UVALDE TEXAS**

*After Chris Llewellyn*

It was Tuesday. School was out  
in two days. It started before noon.  
Most of the dead and wounded  
were ten years old.

He bought the gun  
legally  
the day after he turned  
eighteen. He was known to  
torture small animals.  
He posted threats online.

It was Tuesday.

There was an award ceremony at school  
that morning. Many parents attended.  
Some kids wanted to go home after  
but most stayed for bubbles and  
class parties.

School was out in two days.

He called his mother a bitch  
and moved in with his grandmother.  
He shot his grandmother in the face  
that morning, stole her truck, and drove  
to his old elementary school.

It started before noon.

There were fences. There were locks.  
There were police officers.  
They had training. They had drills.  
The officers were armed.

Most of the dead and wounded  
were ten years old.

The gunman entered the school with an AR-15  
and lots of ammunition.

It was Tuesday.

The gunman entered two adjoining  
fourth grade classrooms. In one room,  
every student died. The teacher was shot  
multiple times.

School was out in two days.

For over an hour law enforcement officers  
converged in the hallway. Hundreds of  
law enforcement officers. For over an hour.  
The officers had guns. The officers  
had shields.

It started before noon.

Some of the victims bled out  
while officers stood in the hall.  
The survivors played dead.  
Some of the children covered themselves  
in the blood of their classmates.

Most of the dead and wounded  
were ten years old.

It was 23 years after Columbine.  
It was 10 years after Sandy Hook.  
It was 5 years after Parkland.

It was Tuesday.

*—Elizabeth S. Wolf*

## **HOMELESS IN BOSTON**

They line up outside the Paulist Fathers  
for a hot meal after a day of begging  
on the streets asking for quarters and dimes  
bearing bitter memories of better times

sitting on the Boston Common grass  
sleeping outside in summer in hallways  
and vestibules in winter

were they sinners, criminals, prostitutes  
to have been punished so or  
druggies – society's bastards, drop outs  
or scattered brains left torn by life  
unable to cope except to pick cans  
from garbage or beg for quarters and  
dimes maybe hoping for better times  
but now wanting only a meal most likely  
a drink or fix

the streets of Boston are their home  
the ignored and scorned sometimes  
feared because those who look at them know  
*that there but for the grace of God go they*

– Zvi A. Sesling

## **RECKONING**

I        What you have loved you have lost

Sunlight over rough floor boards  
by fire charred wood remains  
Swallows swoop for bugs  
by spray small grey corpses  
Two laugh under a bent umbrella  
by quarrel iced silence  
Gleam of eyes in the dark  
by fear a collision  
Surprise of many bells  
by muffles a death knell  
Bright water  
by oil plovers, gulls, seals die  
Warmth of a hand  
by anger a smack  
Valley of waterfalls  
by heat a trickle  
Kind crinkle eyes  
by scorn defeat  
Forsythia  
by drought dead sticks

II        What you will never find again

A forgotten song  
Shine of clutched dandelions  
A moment's return  
The past is now  
Grapes on a withered vine  
Tea in a shattered cup  
An accident undone  
Innocent's laugh  
A lost dream  
The way home

– Molly Mattfield Bennett

## **A FUGUE IN GREY**

Who has the strength needed to defeat  
a rainy Sunday afternoon?  
Defeat your blurred-wet windowpanes;  
the drooping trees' soaked-heavy branches  
almost touching the puddled ground;  
the fallen leaves, soggy as seaweed,  
ready to stick to the slow shoes  
of the few walkers, their heads bent low,  
plodding their dogged way back home.  
While, inside walls swathed in shadows,  
you feel locked in an unlocked room.

— Robert K. Johnson

## **IN A CITY OF GREY OBJECTS**

Grey buildings emerge  
from grey streets and skies  
the grey river floats its grey birds  
I too feel grey on the bridge this morning  
beside runners and bikes and trucks and cars  
then I spy a hawk circling gold above  
it dives

into the tarnished river  
between a pod of geese  
and a line of ducks—  
how they crane their necks!—  
talons dip  
snatch something shining  
and I am alive

— Mary Buchinger

## **GRIM REAPER**

I slide coins over my eyes to dodge death  
hoping the Grim Reaper with his hooded cloak  
and razor-sharp scythe will pass me by, maybe a bit miffed  
that someone else got here first, upset  
by the competition, the unions, the dues, the lawsuits  
when it all used to be his turf  
now even cis women, trans women, two-spirit women  
are ushering people out of this world, *this way, watch your step*  
no longer severing souls no one believes in, simply taking a hand  
offering a smile, and walking softly into the last sunset.

What's a guy to do when no one imagines  
an afterlife of bliss, including me, who has yet to see  
a real live soul, a translucent, squirming soul, leave a body behind  
and float feather-like into cumulous clouds  
and yes, my life was built on lies, but the uniform was cool  
and pay was reasonable  
I will toss my book of names and times  
trade my cloak for a J. Crew swim suit  
my scythe for a surfboard, file for social security  
and retire to the warm water beaches of Waikiki.

— Claire Scott

## **WE WON'T GO BACK**

We won't go back. We won't go back to the back of the bus, the back of the line, won't line up for identity cards, won't hold out our plates for corporate crumbs.

We see your grinning, well-fed hyenas gathering to feast on democracy's carcass. We see Confederate flags flying from shiny pick-up trucks, and the smoldering anger and hate that have burst into flame.

We are dismayed and discouraged to be fighting these ancient battles once again, but you have reminded us that the battles never end, that every generation has to fight them in its own way. So we won't go back. We won't go back to "Yes Sir," "No Sir, head down, hold your tongue keep your place. We won't go back. Won't let our lives be run but those would hammer the words of a prophet of love into swords and guns.

We won't go back to being told whom to love. We won't go back to women dying from back-alley abortions. So we're coming at you, low and hard. We owe it to those who came before us, who sacrificed so much. We owe it to our children, and to our children's children.

We won't go back.

— *Charles Coe*

## **BAD DREAM**

The smaller dog, his jaws around the skull  
of his messmate, attaches to the hull

of the ungainly ship they make. They race  
as if there's no escape from the embrace

that unifies, caught in a darkened sea  
much like the pair I never thought I'd see

until the year I watched a colleague strain  
to siphon off another's fertile brain.

They floated off into a bleak surround  
like Dante's fastened pair, forever bound.

— *Joyce Wilson*

## **EXIT GHOSTS**

*For Othello*

Malice was his –  
he knew its sowing, knew

its germination, knew it as  
a stalking spectral shadow

and finally as  
distorted mind and withered heart,

just as you had known  
the love and trust you lost.

I think of Achilles's dream,  
of Patroclus yearning for a soul at peace,

and imagine you here now,  
the grip released, the burden gone.

I wonder if  
your soul might speak

not only with your voice  
but through your eyes;

and whether you  
might warn of sorrow

when the specter's shadow  
never dims but fades.

– *Theodore Wachs*

## **I SEE NO STAR**

I seek a single light,  
but the sky offers no comfort,  
only a canvas of relentless dark.

No glint, no gleam to guide me,  
no ancient promise from above.  
The world below sleeps in silence,  
unaware of the void in the heavens.

I walk familiar streets,  
each step like angry mud,  
but the constellations fail me—  
no North Star to steer by,  
no Southern Cross to mark my way.

I used to trust the night,  
believed in the quiet certainties  
of its velvet expanse,  
but tonight, I am left alone,  
adrift in a sea of black.

Perhaps the stars are there,  
hidden, obscured by clouds  
or lost in the haze of memory,  
but I see no star,  
only the weight of the unseen.

And in this absence,  
I find a strange peace—  
a quiet surrender,  
where no light needs to reach,  
where I need no star to dream.

– *Jeffery Allen Tobin*

## **PET RAVEN**

After long,  
your losses  
mount up.

Every single  
Lenore, the  
Annabel Lees.

Even foes  
promoted to  
lost friends.

No strength  
to cry for  
love of God.

Worm turned,  
all you loved  
left you alone.

Blackbird  
turns sole  
companion.

Pet feathers  
until very end.  
Let him take

eyes when  
gone, enough  
demons seen.

— *Chad Parenteau*

## **SHADOW LIFE**

To live  
after the rivers' spill

drought  
cratering earth

after crows have fallen  
to stillness

silence  
after spinning wings

after stars have plunged  
from blue light

blackened holes  
in the earth

vitreous sky  
opaque

hanging eternally  
above it all

~

above it all  
hanging eternally

opaque  
vitreous sky

in the earth  
blackened holes

from blue light  
after stars have plunged

after spinning wings  
silence

to stillness  
after crows have fallen

cratering earth  
drought

after the rivers spill  
to live

— *Ruth C. Chad*

## **BLASTED OAK**

I am this  
Blasted oak  
(Well not quite yet  
But soon enough)  
Brittle wizened limbs  
Wrenched just so  
Splintered by the wind  
A Friedrich painting  
A poignant sublime  
In stark detail  
For your perusal  
Far from a sapling  
And now no longer  
Tall stately timber  
(You'd think  
I'd be weary of  
Ponderous allusions)  
Eventually this tree  
Will rot and crumble  
Wend its way  
Returning to loam  
Nevertheless  
I am this  
Blasted oak

— *David Sapp*

## **READING RILKE, AGAIN**

The reclining chair all the way back.  
Eyes closed. Rilke in the lap. Not large  
but heavy with words and implications.  
Every few pages needs a pause to gauge  
those lines. To gaze at the sky. The clouds  
growing dark and dense. The wind pushing  
the pine tree branches to its own desires.  
They do a green dance in the air,  
free for this moment from the tree trunk's  
gravity of purpose. Or lean back and nap  
a millennia in minutes. The mountain  
beyond the field weathers, huge chunks  
of stone have fallen to the valley.  
Generations of small animals came  
and went in these new rocky homes.  
They continue. Blood and adaptation.  
The reader picks up the book,  
tries to return to his own century  
inside a poem that's been breathing  
a hundred and twelve years.

— Gary Metras

## **JUST SITTING**

Sometimes I sit on the front porch  
waiting for hummingbirds,  
but I'm not always successful  
if the best measure  
of success is seeing one because . . .

Sometimes I sit on the front porch  
just sitting, pleased to get nothing done,  
nothing more than pondering,  
maybe a little planning because . . .

Even as I sit on the front porch  
waiting for hummingbirds,  
everything on my to-do list  
will still be there  
waiting for me.

— Ellie O'Leary

## **THE PIANO LESSON**

— Peter Magubane, photographer, 1932-2024

Such joy —  
the woman's face a sunburst  
the boy's, holy in its longing, loving,  
head turned skyward,  
hands stretched lovingly  
over the black and white keys.  
The photo is black and white,  
the famous music teacher  
and her radiant pupil  
in Sophiatown,  
thirty-eight years  
before apartheid ended.  
He is maybe ten, maybe blind  
He doesn't need to see the notes  
in order to play them  
his hands planted so firmly on the keys  
as if he owns them.

— Fran Schumer

## **COVID MONKS**

We found ourselves  
    in the abyssopelagic zone,  
eyes clouded by phosphenes.  
    No wonder we were tired!  
    We couldn't see our way out  
    of the morass  
though we put  
    one foot in front,  
the other lagged  
    behind, the syzygy  
necessary for the elixir  
nowhere in sight.  
    We hunkered down  
in our bunkers like monks.  
Though we prayed for light  
    To pierce the gloom,  
    At night we cultivated  
    Our studies of doom.

— *Ed Meek*

## **TIR NA NOG**

The wet nose of my long-dead dog greets me.  
Through the apple-strewn otherworld I pace,  
Veiled by druid invisibility.  
Mortality requests a face-to-face.

Through the apple-strewn otherworld I pace,  
Here I perceive the substratal homeland.  
Mortality requests a face-to-face.  
Life begins again, don't misunderstand.

Here I perceive the substratal homeland,  
Here and now, hidden, as the earth moves on.  
Life begins again, don't misunderstand:  
Joy radiates from this phenomenon.

Here and now, hidden, as the earth moves on,  
These same years deleted by happenstance.  
Joy radiates from this phenomenon,  
Returns enchantment to the realm of dance.

These same years deleted by happenstance,  
Veiled by druid invisibility,  
Returns enchantment to the realm of dance.  
The wet nose of my long-dead dog greets me.

— *Dennis Daly*

## LOGOS

If it comes, the word,  
as pale as naught  
as sugary as a crooked  
tooth in a mouthful

of gleam, covered like a fog  
-eaten ship adrift in a whipped  
dawn, hushed, better left  
unsaid

symphony, deep and ever  
-changing tide, coasting gull  
floating fish, riddle of bullets  
starring the beloved,

would it sleep and canopy  
the field of spent bones,  
would it be a rope of lights  
a string of tales told

to hands that open and close  
like precise umbrellas  
would it mock birds in rain  
would it be rain

to still a thousand fields  
of cut cane, the cotton  
flowering dangerous out  
-bursts multiplied against

a million pilfered,  
would it baptize a first  
song, needle in the  
record's black groove?

— *Danielle Legros Georges*

## TO MY SKI TRAIL

I passed through you,  
inhaled the scent of pine,  
but as the days crept into March,  
as the days marched on,  
as the sun rose higher  
above the trees,  
with each passing day,  
as I'd pass over and through  
with each loop on skis,  
as I'd take such joy in you,  
I whittled you down  
just a little more  
especially around  
that shushing place  
where I'd ski the hill,  
glide into you.

Ensconced in pines,  
overshadowed by pines,  
imbued with pines,  
you were my best friend—  
my home,  
my fling.

Now you lie there  
barely clothed—  
your narrow grooves  
slicked with wet  
while the bare ground  
encroaches  
attempting  
to steal your breath.

With the deliquescence of time,  
you jostle for snow's final pleasures—  
a sweat  
a kiss  
a melting  
under sun.

— *Carla Schwartz*

## **WAITING FOR OCTOBER**

One blue Hudson Bay woolen  
from North Dakota childhood  
still blankets my bed  
against night's cool damp,  
but sun golden  
as the flowers that bear its name  
still rules the day.  
Orion, maybe still hunting Autumn,  
doesn't dominate the night.

I'm still giving Summer love,  
but uneasy to give my heart  
to what I remember as fickle  
my impermanent lover  
his increasingly chill embrace in my bed  
withholding desire's heat.  
My feet tingle for socks  
while flannel pajamas hide flesh.  
My legs open only  
for the cat on top of the quilt  
to rest peacefully  
asleep between them.  
He sleeps. I wonder  
what October holds ...

– Karen Klein

## **WOMEN'S COLLEGE REUNION**

We talk about our aging parents —  
arthritis, osteoporosis, knee replacements,  
stroke, and Parkinson's.  
I imagine our children —  
carried by us into this world —  
carrying the weight of our aging bodies,  
burdened by their dead grandparents,  
generations carrying generations  
shrouded in veils of our former selves.

– Miriam Manglani

## **GRANDPA EAGLE**

*A-Gong* loved to imagine himself  
A great eagle soaring through the sky  
Eyes defying the sun, staring it down.

*Ma-Ma* told us how he once  
Caught a crow with his bare hands  
Like an eagle, just swooped and caught it

And kept it in a cage until it pooped so much  
He realized it could never live here  
And instead had to return home

We know *A-Gong* now embraces the warmth  
Of the sun as he flies high above  
Watching all of us, our guardian eagle.

*Ma-Ma* nods and smiles with wet eyes.

– E Kraft

## **CHARLES RIVER VILLANELLE**

*Old adage: you never step into the same river twice.  
by Priscilla Turner Spada*

The river of my youth is always there—  
a well-spring in my mind, my memories' ocean—  
the current's steady mantra like a prayer.

We swam, canoed, and skated. It was where  
we conjured all of our mischievous notions—  
the river of my youth, always there.

Fish could not resist the silvery glare  
of our lures, in the river's rippling motion,  
the steady current; they didn't have a prayer.

On skates, we'd show off our *Olympic* flair,  
and dare to slide on crackled ice, less-frozen—  
the river of my youth was always there.

Summer's dares: dive deep, come up for air  
under capsized boats; swim far, no caution!—  
the current's steady mantra like a prayer.

What luck to have a river play-space...rare.  
The sights, the sounds, the scents stir deep  
emotion. The river of my youth will always be  
there;  
the current's steady mantra, like a prayer.

— *Priscilla Turner Spada*

## **SEEING STARS**

Many have a deity, some a desert, others  
a river. Sweet Bach, Chopin, river rhythms,  
rhythms of Keats' odes. Sweet hyperbole:  
in *Death of a Salesman* Willie Loman  
has to break his neck to see a star,  
so closed in he lives. Go to the desert,  
see flames fly from the rock pit.  
Look to the heavens, if you must.

— *Peter Mladinic*

## **RENEWED**

"What is the expiration date?"  
asked the clerk at the gates.  
I checked the notation on my arm.  
"Today, I think," I replied.  
He flipped through the book,  
found the right page.  
His finger traveled down to my name.  
He made a notation  
with his golden feather pen.  
"OK," he said, "you're renewed,  
for another year. Come back then."

I woke up, got out of bed.  
It was still somewhat cloudy,  
but it was going to be a sunny day.

— *Keith Tornheim*

## **LAST LEAVES**

Orchids are meant to bloom, but what are we here for? I go out into the morning, praying for hope. A few last leaves on the weeping cherry tree. Meanwhile, the work on the road stopped years ago. The road goes nowhere, total uselessness. But the dark-eyed juncos are back from the Arctic bringing the promise of winter. They nest close to the ground and don't know a thing about shivering. Near death my father lies on his side so his profile shows its pure line. He looks young again, a flare of pink on his white face. In his last days he thinks his life means nothing.

*Sorry*, a woman says, pushing a wheelchair into the doorway. *My mistake. We don't know where we're going.* A man is slumped in the chair. *I do*, he laughs and lifts his bare foot, the toenails painted red. Then they back up and wheel off. *I just want to sleep*, my father says. His eyelids flutter, and he closes his eyes. He dreams his mother is waiting by the side of a road. A light rain falls, pattering on her umbrella open as a flower. *Ma, what are you doing here?* he asks. She too is young again, as she was when she had him, these two born again in death.

— *Miriam Levine*

## **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

Beauty ...  
overshadowed by pain  
walks off hand-in-hand with night.  
Always seeking the sunrise beyond dark  
premonitions. Chill fills the air. Moonglow  
whispers through once lush trees – now  
skeletons reaching out with ominous arms.  
Limbs curl inward grasping in desperation –  
holding on to hope. Tides labor to right a  
wrong once written in the sand. Memories  
fight back tears. Time refuses to listen.  
There is sorrow in the gaining and wisdom  
in the loss. Can there be such anguish buried  
within a sigh? The beast shall have its way.  
Moments languish / stillness invades.  
Stars wink seductively - opening a portal.  
I follow ...  
Beauty shall not be quelled.

– Ann Christine Tabaka

## **HOOK AND EYE**

Ten below zero, and still the hook,  
indefatigable, pulls at the eye  
which just as energetically resists  
as the wind tries to yank open  
the red door to the shed. It may be  
just a little warmer at the spot  
where the two strain at each other,  
but even the highlights look cold,  
one round the sun's side of the eye,  
another along the shaft of the hook.  
The dull paint on the door blisters  
and flakes away over the snow,  
and the doorframe has long cracks  
like sciatica, from sill to lintel, but  
the hook and its eye, or the eye  
and its hook, hold the whole winter  
together, a curtain of glittering  
icicles lifted, unveiling the scene.

– Ted Kooser

## **NIGHT STALKERS**

Back in the 50s and early 60s,  
smalltown rural Pennsylvania,  
kids could camp with their buddies  
in somebody's backyard, or even  
the public park down by the creek.

Our parents never worried about us.  
Pedophiles didn't lurk in the bushes.  
Nobody locked their doors.  
There'd been only one murder  
in Perkasio folks could remember.  
Burglaries few, kidnappings never.

We would wander the streets  
for the sheer excitement of being  
afloat while the whole town slept,  
the town's one cop car easy enough  
to avoid, hide in the bushes,  
imagine we're soldiers on patrol,  
evading the Krauts and the Japs.

The sound of a dog barking,  
maybe another, barking at cats,  
barking at us or the moon.  
The moon like a Cheshire cat,  
or a face: the Man in the Moon.  
The Milky Way. The Big Dipper.

How could we have known  
what awaited us in the darkness  
of future years, too young to even  
imagine a future, let alone our own?

Once, we raided Old Man Bowen's  
garage, knowing he always kept  
cookies and Cokes in his workshop  
fridge, but we didn't take them all.

– W. D. Ehrhart

## **DATING PAST SIXTY**

*I*

I am no lily pad  
but I am no cactus;  
a little water  
regularly supplied suffices.  
When the rain comes  
my leaves curl neither  
up nor down, but stand ready,  
thirsty, not parched.

\*\*\*

I have done spectacular things  
and have flattering pictures for proof.  
When I kneel photogenically,  
wistfully  
on one knee in the field  
of wildflowers looking  
at the horizon,  
I clearly take root.

\*\*\*

I am a mid-size luxury sedan  
in need of front-end alignment only sometimes  
because I turn corners too fast  
and ignore the wear and tear on  
my struts and shocks.  
But please know, my transmission is reliable,  
always smooth at any speed.  
You never feel it when I shift gears.

\*\*\*

I'm looking for a well-tuned violin,  
a clay fire pit in the backyard  
around which I can hold my freezing hands,  
a medical clamp that can stop  
a gushing vein, a pigment  
on canvas where you feel free to paint  
what you want no matter  
what anyone may think.

\*\*\*

Together I am hoping  
we will be a leaf blower  
neglected in the corner of a garage  
that doesn't get any light.  
We will stand there a long time and do nothing,  
content in knowing  
the leaves are beautiful left on their own;  
a crisp tide of yellow, orange, red,  
ready to be covered by snow.

2

First date and we sit across from each other over dinner  
sizing up one another like FBI profilers on *Criminal Minds*;  
the way the napkin ring is removed,  
placement of flatware, smoothing out  
the linen napkin on the lap,  
each movement's meaning –  
leaning in, pulling back, a  
crinkle in the corner of the mouth,  
eye contact only at the start of sentences  
then none at all through salad conversation,  
listening to the crunching of the croutons  
more than the inessential words,  
tedious entree of a flavorless meal  
until mercifully it's time to go,  
neither of us a person of interest anymore.

3

My first year single  
so many women had a dating profile picture  
wearing a knitted, pink pussy hat  
from the million women march  
sometimes in a group shot, sometimes  
solo, close up, topping  
a bold, determined smile  
that wasn't a smile exactly  
but a fist raised  
against brutality.

No one shows those pictures anymore.  
Dogs are the thing now;  
it's rare to go through a profile  
without two or three smiling canines  
with captions like "my love bug"  
beneath cocked heads and goofy faces.

I have been on these sites  
through the presidencies  
of two old men, growing  
closer to their ages when they  
were elected than my age  
when I divorced. I promise  
I won't grab your pussy  
but I won't be your dog, either,  
no matter how sweetly  
you scratch my belly.

4

I keep the hundred milligram tablet  
of sildenafil wrapped in cellophane  
in my wallet. If it feels right  
I go to the bathroom before  
we leave the restaurant, unwrap  
it and swallow it while standing in  
the stall. I am sixty-three. The  
only feeling I have left from  
being a teenager about to experience  
the pleasures of the world is embarrassment.

5

It will be twenty years until the next total eclipse,  
a Tuesday in August when I am eighty-three.

I scroll through a dating app  
to see if there is someone to go with me.

I have been doing this for seven years since the divorce.

I want to say to all of them:  
I am the one who sits in a parked car when it rains  
listening as drops splatter on the windshield and roof in rhythmic percussion  
accompanied by wind and thunder.

I want to say let us drive north in 2044  
reminiscing about our life together.  
We can stand in an open field in the middle of the day  
when everything goes dark  
and the confused birds, thinking it's the night,  
commence their startling racket.

– Myles Gordon

### **PREDICAMENT OF THE TRAILING SPOUSE**

These scientists are thrilled -  
a colleague from the States has come  
to Bangalore to give a talk.  
At his hotel they beg him, *Dine with us*.  
The expert brings his wife – superfluous,  
ignored. The men talk shop; all feast  
on rice pilau, spiced vegetables and meat.

Outside the restaurant door  
a small girl grabs the wife's soft dress,  
lifts up her hand. One scientist berates:  
*It isn't nice to beg!* The stricken wife  
has not a thing to give her suppliant.  
Had she the nerve, she'd ask the haughty  
man, *You think hunger is nice?*

– Denise Provost

### **TRYST**

Last night I found myself  
in London in bed  
with a long-dead lover

London and he were  
as I remembered  
and I was once again the girl  
he had last made love to a lifetime ago

He didn't seem to know he had died  
and I didn't have the heart to tell him  
only to hold him all night long  
until I woke up alone  
in the bed and the body  
I sleep in now

– Tanya Contos

### **MY NAME IS HARDY**

Emma Hardy, your wife and mate,  
Once resident of this Max Gate,  
My home for forty or more years,  
My vale of joy, my dale of tears.  
I wore, it's true, the air blue dress  
The day we passed at Lyonnaise.  
Your love for me was unrehearsed,  
As we walked on the Beeny Crest,  
St.-Juliot's, just sea and us.

No child would come to join our nest,  
And so, I gardened hyacinth,  
And marigold, and amaranth.  
I love that garden, though my cat's  
Turned feral in its weeds, but that's  
Just how things are. You've wived again,  
She'll get no odes, all aptly penned,  
Still, you love her, I see the fire.  
Her age? No, I will not inquire.  
How cold you were that afternoon,  
Not knowing I'd be going soon.

It's true, I'm dead, but I'm alive  
Still in your poems of Nineteen-Twelve.  
When I read them out loud again  
The tenderness returns, the same  
As it once did when we were new.  
Farewell, my dearest one, adieu.  
I'd throw a party come December,  
If sudden parting that November  
Had not struck down our wedded tree  
And set you free at last of me.  
I say here now the soft Goodbye  
I left unsaid that autumn day.

– *Zara Raab*

### **PRODITE POETICA**

What cues will come when I call?  
Perhaps few, if any at all.  
My brain is dormant, numb,  
Encompassed by a thoughtless wall.

I cannot scale the waterfall  
To view below the flow  
Of my fleeting, flotsam reveries.  
They are caught in a jam

In the elbow of the river.  
My mind is filled with echoes  
Of lessons that taught laughter.  
What I seek is not above ground.

Images rise behind a dam.  
I am surrounded by a beehive of words  
That cross-pollinate in an effort to bloom.  
My muse is a mirage that removes the weeds.

I sit alone in my book-cased room,  
Pen poised, needing lines to plant their seeds..  
Soon, insight from shelved volumes presently silent.  
Their verses, often sources for reverent hints.

– *Harris Gardner*

## **SHHH, NOT TOO LOUD NOW**

I am thrust unwillingly back  
into childhood, the Polish kids  
on their Easter shouting Christ-  
killer, chasing me, fists raised,

Now once again a target  
through my dead mother's  
genes, strangers who hate  
me without knowing who I am

except what they see as poison  
an enemy, nonhuman, vermin  
to be killed like a rat or a spider.  
Nothing I ever did or said.

Once again, think carefully  
about celebrating our holidays  
too publicly, careful what you  
reveal to others, a pariah.

I marched along, confident  
I belonged. Not anymore.

– Marge Piercy

## **THINGS: YARD-SALE KARMA**

Strangers turn things over  
check sets for missing pieces  
squint at a brass frame  
with the photo torn out

no one chooses that black vase  
dusty years on the shelf  
but a girl buys the bracelet  
I can't wear any more

because he gave it to me  
pain leaves silent scars  
scratches no polish can clean  
no magic scare away

now spring rain sprinkles  
the green wheelbarrow  
my daughter pushed at four  
time to drag things inside

first those canvas beach chairs  
dismal as the ex that chose them  
but a small blond woman  
points and offers cash

so I smile with queenly calm and say  
'it's a deal' surprised she doesn't  
see stains of bad karma  
which it seems belong only to me.

– Nina Rubinstein Alonso

## **SCAMANDER (THE RIVER GOD)**

Rivers are atmospheric these days, and I live on the East Coast where we swoon over partnerships between friends named Tree and River, it's meant to be. In the evening, we ignore the smell of spring in January and race to ski fields where they make pow so fluffy and white it's reminiscent of Karl the Fog and how deluge from the Pacific Ocean may replenish him and save the Redwoods. That is, will the atmospheric hurricane make it to San Francisco? It's been reported, under threat of one inch of water every hour, in Los Angeles at the Grammys where Luke Combs and Tracy Chapman sing "I got a fast car" super-fast. Faster I hope than that GMC halfway under like some diabolic Duck Boat, or the poor lady bailing out her passenger seat with a plastic water bottle: floating yellow Lays bag, black and red candy wrappers bobbing logged in a mini version of the Great Atlantic Garbage Patch; or rather, coalescing into the Great Los Angeles Debris Field. Where, I wonder, is the Achilles brave enough to fight this river god? I just keep thinking of extreme kayakers from the nineties that lit themselves on fire and paddled down twenty foot waterfalls. Or strapped on a parachute, jumped in their state of the art plastic boats and pushed themselves out of planes at ten thousand feet in the air. Their one dream, travel to Mt. Kailash and kayak all four rivers stemming from its peak. They would not, however, seek out bliss, meditation, the surf of sunlight, Tantric ritual, or enlightenment, just the white waters, rapids, ignoring crocodiles, clearing froth and floating into Fibonacci sequences whittled out of valleys and reminiscent of that haiku,

"My barn having burned  
I now own a better view  
Of the stars,"

they race to conquer the rivers because some governor has chosen to build a dam which will leave their conquering song obsolete; so they play it fast, make it new, while the old rock face spirals like telescopes to the cosmos. And they forget humans are not meant to ride plastic down rapids the size of stampeding buffalo; and so, friends die —no fault of their own, or maybe the fault of the sea nymph having just dipped the surviving friend's heel into holy rivers. The surviving friend mashing dogs that run through rough waters so relentlessly that he is left alone chopping blades into churning polar bear chests. Why? Out of FOMO? Despite semblances of insanity, the lone living kayaker returns from Mt. Kailash one river short, goes on MTV, and still finds acolytes that will dive with him headfirst into the deep, riding heaven's atmospheric rivers and hurricanes.

— Ryan B. Clinesmith Montalvo

## **THE LOST FROST SPIRIT**

*(a contemporary response to John Greenleaf Whittier's "The Frost Spirit")*

He goes, - he goes, - the Frost Spirit goes! While our planet warms with ease,  
we humans hold our habits tight, unfazed by a few degrees,  
though academics warn us surely, we cannot withstand  
whatever Mother Nature plans by way of reprimand.

He goes, - he goes, - the Frost Spirit goes! From the frozen Arctic Plain  
where the polar bears play on ice floes, soon nothing will remain.  
Just water, water everywhere and floods that threaten all  
of life as we now know it. Will we cause our own downfall?

He goes, - he goes, - the Frost Spirit goes! Chased away by the emissions  
of fossil fuels that keep fat CEOs in high positions,  
while leaves and lakes await in vain the sunless, dreadful blast,  
announcing of necessity their summer lives have passed.

He goes, - he goes, - the Frost Spirit goes! Though we've had cause to complain  
each time he's ushered in the snow, the sleet, and freezing rain.  
We call him back now, hoping winter won't be too delayed,  
because there's danger in a haughty hand that's overplayed.

*– Deborah Szabo*

**THERE'S NOTHING TO  
EXPLAIN, THERE'S ONLY  
SOMETHING TO DESCRIBE**

the tide is going out  
with a milky sheen upon it  
and the little island across the way  
is doubled its wholeness crisp  
upon the water each detail  
intact now the image  
starts to sway a slow  
undulation a carousel turning  
gently blobs of shape  
within the shape rolling  
as the water rolls  
mysteriously and high up  
over soft and intricate  
textures of pine and beech  
a reflected shimmer  
rotates figures of light  
ghostly procession

– Hilary Sallick

**THE VIEW FROM THE 10<sup>TH</sup>  
FLOOR**

is undoubtedly wonderful  
and I don't want to see it  
on my visit to the  
cardiovascular unit,

where you tell me  
the doctors explained  
“We cut out just a small  
piece of your heart,”  
and I say that sounds  
like a country western,  
so we sing it and laugh.

Where, leaving, I pass  
those windows again  
I don't want to look out of,  
that I know your bed  
faces away from,  
despite the fine panoramas  
they'd undoubtedly provide,

of our city, our lives:  
the avenues, colleges, steeples,  
three-deckers, stadiums,  
and eastward, a corner of ocean.

– Susan Donnelly

## **LOST IN FINDERS TOWN**

I once was lost in Finders Town  
where loss was not an option.  
The Finders never missed a clue  
to where one was, or who was who,  
and they would scour in avid numbers  
every inch and quarter acre,  
always finding who'd gone missing,  
and they brought them back to reason.  
But I'll make no bones about it,  
I was lost and not just missing—  
was a figure in good standing  
who'd gone haunting Finders Town  
and got so lost my presence faded  
till I wasn't findable. The Finders  
made a myth of me, the one they knew  
I mustn't be, for that one was  
embodied, a sure candidate  
for finding. As myth I was exempt  
from normal ceaselessness of searching,  
so the Finders heaved a sigh  
and dropped their search. I haunt  
with jollity and purpose. I am lost  
in Finders Town, and being mythic  
feel its heartbeat as I rove.  
As such things go in such a place,  
I'm simply glad to be so lost.  
I love this town I'm lost in.  
I am a happy myth.

— *Tomas O'Leary*

## **ON BEING GIVEN A MING DY- NASTY SCROLL PAINTING BY A DEPARTING FRIEND**

She unties the knotted cord  
and the long scroll slowly unrolls  
from the bamboo stick  
to release centuries of dust  
and reveal a void  
of pale green from which  
arises an ink-black pine.  
On one twisted branch  
a single cone hangs  
like the full moon  
over a mountain that isn't there.  
To the left, a few lines  
brushed in an exquisite hand,  
concise, as such poems are.  
Although our parting words,  
zai jian, suggest we will,  
my friend and I won't meet again,  
divided by a thousand miles,  
and both of us old. Rolled up,  
the tree changes to shadow,  
the writing to a trace of sound.  
What can last?  
Three times the artist has stamped his name in red.

— *Ruth Holzer*

## **SELF PORTRAIT AS A LUTE PLAYER**

*After, Artemisia Gentileschi, 1616-1618*

Yes, I painted myself. Because I could not go  
to taverns (though I knew them), and though  
I knew the courts, and painted them, I knew  
that any good musician, from tavern or court,  
would charge an arm and a peg (pun intended)  
to pose for me, and too, by sitting myself, I could  
show this world a thing or two. That I could  
paint. That I was not afraid. That I was  
exceptional (no irony intended). Assolutamente.  
And, think Caravaggio, his lute and player—  
neither man nor woman. I wanted woman.  
Why not? To show me plain and clear.  
I was twenty-three, and yes, I played that lute—  
*Fine Knacks for Ladies, D' où vient cela, belle,*  
my favorites. Dozens more. Sang them too.

~~

When I'd mastered simple chords, I would  
place the lute on my knees, bend my neck  
and waist, place my head behind the box, fit  
my ear against the backside mahogany,  
reach around and down and stroke or pluck  
the strings—for the trembles, throbs,  
rolls—from ear to heart to gut to groin—to feel  
the marble rocks of quarries, the stillest, deepest  
lakes, the calla's satin whites and yellows.  
I would strum and strum, with fingernails,  
fingertips, the pad of my thumb, until my father  
would nudge me, have to nudge me again.

~~

Paintings are planned and brushed, gowns  
patterned, draped, and sewn. Instruments too—  
the luthier's dimensions conceived with  
compass and rule, his lumber sawed and cut,  
then dried, dampened, shaped into curve and line  
with knives, with files, with gritty paper.  
Clear, white yew planed sharp into brace.  
And his rosette, carved in heady, white,

Alpine spruce—shaped like a prism of stars,  
perfect flakes of snow, Leonardo's dreams.

~~

Yes, I wore that lapis gown—that gown I painted—  
gold embroidered, fringe of white, and I wore  
that turban, that Indian scarf. I wore my breasts  
in the Gypsy way of taverns, Medici's courts.  
But here's my secret—how I'd done my face.  
You may ponder it—the set of my lips,  
the taste of a frown, the glimpse of a thousand  
thoughts in my eyes. I was good, but not so fine  
a player, not so strong that I could smile, relax  
when I fingered a barre—those beastly chords  
(I cheated, you see—omitting the sixth,  
the thickest string, the deepest course—but,  
dannazione! I'd seen men neglecting the fifth!).  
I could've made on my face an, *it-is-nothing ho*  
*hum* smile. A yawn—uno sbadiglio. But it was  
something. It is something still. That barre  
says as much, even minus the sixth. Certamente.

— William Snyder

## **LEVITATE**

Men walked on the moon  
While my skinny runner self  
Answering the thunderclap  
Ran to the track  
Where I hoped to meet a woman  
Of my dreams  
A fellow knock kneed rain lover  
Together, we would cheat gravity

Many miles of thundering feet behind me  
Jersey bog swelters in ninety nine degrees  
Finishers given a blueberry hot dog and a medal

Get away river towns, Hawaiian volcanoes,  
Pacific triathlons thick with kelp  
Altitude in South America  
Cities with air so fetid  
I wanted to slice my wrists

But in outer Boston, fifty years later  
on the third of August  
in a brick-oven summer  
Ohioan Neil Armstrong  
would understand  
I saw her  
In the corner of my eye  
a young woman

A flash of lightning, then boom - the starter's gun  
she ran for it, barefoot, crossing the town green  
in black and white shorts and singlet  
My heart skipped as she leaped off the pavement,  
into the air, her winged feet

Following her climb into the pewter sky  
past the spire of the town church  
She turned, eyeing the Earth, smiled  
Soft as the rain on our gold pates  
En Rapture!  
On the way to her Mt. Olympus

Thumbing her nose at gravity,  
Onlookers ran in disbelief  
I asked a man

Can you imagine how Armstrong felt  
Before taking that first step?.

– Eric Jason Silverman

## **FOR ALL OTHER INQUIRIES, PLEASE PRESS 2**

this last shred being too tough to chew  
or the teeth being too dull  
or we were not meant to eat  
or we were not meant to be consumed

this last drop drying up immediately  
scaling over in the sun  
a perfect muse of a ghost milked out  
onto the floor

this unopened box being both empty  
and filled

that should be enough but no  
it's never enough in this dark quiet  
where words don't come  
where all you want to do is hum

that grave at the back of your throat  
where all words go  
where milk and honey and wine all flow  
not a single one in equal measure

this eyelid stapled shut so  
the light doesn't crawl in

– Allen Seward

## **BEGINNING WITH ELIOT**

*That is not what I meant at all.*  
The piano drones on, bumps against  
windows, explaining darkness simply,  
an aloneness. The room is bland enough,  
innocuously populated, plants, bodies...  
glasses colored with ice cubes hover,  
make conversation, melt and age without  
notice. On the walls, paintings sigh disgusted  
and disapproving, as the clock struggles  
to embrace itself, to make air articulate,  
stop stuttering, and even if indifferent,  
to create meaning out of erasure, a nothing.

– Mark Fleckensyein

## **SPEAK**

I adore how the dog climbs onto the bed  
on nights of mayhem, and how, as we drive along,

she rests her elegant snout on my shoulder  
so we see the same world at the same time.

I adore how, in the quiet of day,  
she'll stare and stare at me,

sniffing the air as if to unleash the difference  
between us, breathe it in, take it to heart.

And some days she can come oh so close —  
sense my happiness or sorrow as she would a coming storm,

feel my impatience, boredom, the germ of giddiness,  
as easily as she'd sniff out the ghost of a rabbit

through the night's freshly fallen snow.  
And still, because nothing is ever quite enough,

I find myself wanting more, like for her to wake me  
in the night and ask why dogs live such short lives,

or why most everything I feed her is dirt-dull,  
or why she's always tethered, if not with a leash

then with my voice, while the haughty cats hunt free,  
or why she must always stay behind when I leave

the house for work. And where do I go, anyway?  
*Ask me. Sit. Stay. Speak.*

Ants lay down pheromone routes to ready food,  
Birds reclaim each other across vast expanses of sky.

Dolphins read meaning in a thousand quick clicks  
of the tongue. But none ever asks, "Why?"

No other animal stops to reminisce, to recall  
the simple genius of, say, calf-life or lambness,

or to question circumstance or admire instinct  
or consider the weightlessness of eternity.

It's a strange fate, being the only ones who tell  
of love and betrayal, the ones who spin out fiction,

psalm the peculiar logic of religion — the ones  
who long for release from what they have done.

Tonight, I try to imagine how this world would be  
if, at any hour, we could converse freely

with the dog, or sloth or ferret or sparrow  
or box turtle — all whip-smart and Socratically tuned.

How odd the shift: the way we'd bind  
our fate tighter to theirs,

now the shared keepers of all sparring language,  
using sound to sculpt the story of time,

tell of sleep and forests and the heft of music,  
rewrite the doxology of beauty and drive,

as once again we swing wide those great creaky gates  
of wonder and want.

— *Michael Brosnan*

## **THE 80S**

Regan reinstates apple pie and mother.  
MJ moonwalks neighbor out of the hood.  
Billy Jean is not my lover.

Soft and personal, computers start taking over.  
Just as everybody wants to rule the world  
Regan wields apple pie and mother.

Stallone is wondering why not another  
*Rocky*, another *Rambo*. It's Hollywood.  
Billy Jean is not my lover.

Yes and No busy the cup at Sandover  
with Ephraim and David Jackson on the Ouija board.  
Regan digs in. He digs apple pie and mother.

Unions? Cocaine? Just say No. We'll smother  
the Clean Air Act out for good.  
Oh and, Billy Jean is not my lover.

Silt beds shift in the Mississippi River.  
Mount Saint Helen's shudders into cloud.  
Regan gosh darn it—apple pie and mother.  
Billy Jean is not my lover.

— *Michael Todd Steffen*

## **SAWDUST**

The scent of sawdust on a basement floor  
draws me back to hours our dad would spend  
away from us, beyond one varnished door.

For hours on end, Dad, deaf since his World War,  
ran his screeching saw while we'd contend  
the smell of sawdust on our basement floor,

the spiraled shavings—maple, pine—were more  
intriguing than our games. Once he'd descend  
away from us, beyond one varnished door,

our brother soon began to venture more  
and more, while we girls learned to mop, knit, mend.  
The scent of sawdust on our basement floor

meant Dad would not have time to play before  
he'd fix a bureau—time he could defend  
away from us, beyond that varnished door.

One day, I'd risk the stairs. I'd dare ignore  
the rule. I'd grasp one tool, draw blood—pretend  
the scent of sawdust on our basement floor  
remained, for me, beyond that varnished door.

– *Paulette Demers Turco*

## AWAITING YOU

I am waiting for you  
Grandmother Moon  
to rise from the horizon hills  
In the twilight  
I do not see you  
Will you arrive later  
than the past few evenings?

I glance to the east  
& see your apricot ball  
emerging from unseen clouds

Rise, Grandmother  
Rise

For a month of yours  
I have waited for your return to fullness  
I have traveled to this lake  
surrounded by jungle hills  
to watch your light  
silver water once more

For a moment  
you stand full, unhidden  
But again  
you playfully  
pass behind the clouds

I look for you  
now golden-white  
& once more clear

Tonight  
Grandmother Moon  
you will be  
dancing with the clouds  
your light will be  
dancing on Lago Izabal

— *Lorraine Caputo*

## INSIDE THE RAIN

What lies    resides    inside the rain—  
vast wind-thrashed drapes  
or soft summer showers—

sorrow    peace    regret    bliss  
Within each droplet an iota of  
baby's breath    salt    mold  
dogsmell    eggshell  
bee mandible    old man's cane  
dinosaur DNA    planetary dust  
starshine

also                    things without names  
not yet here    not yet dreamed of  
not even by gods or birds

That encapsulated soup—  
blue or black  
or gray or yellow  
cleanses    erases  
war    death  
miscellaneous toxicities

holds  
then spills  
the world

— *Judy Brackett Crowe*

## **WRITERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

**Nina Rubinstein Alonso's** work has appeared in Ploughshares, The New Yorker, Nixes Mate, Writing in a Woman's Voice, Peacock Journal, etc. Her poem Crosby Pond, published in The New Yorker years ago, has been chosen to be included in A Century Of Poetry In The New Yorker, very gratifying to hear especially as This Body where it was originally published is out of print. Other publications: Riot Wake, Cervena Barva Press, Distractions En Route, Ibbetson Street, Travels With Fernando, Wilderness House Literary Journal, all on Amazon. She also edits Constellations a Journal of Poetry and Fiction.

**Molly Mattfield Bennett** has published in *Ibbetson Street*, *Off the Coast*, and *Solstice*, and was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first book *Name the Glory* was published by Wilderness House Press, her second *Point-No-Point* was published by FutureCycle Press. Molly is active in the Boston Poetry Community.

**Michael Brosnan** is a poet and writer based in Exeter, New Hampshire. His most recent collection of poetry, *Emu Blis, Bums Lie, Blue-ism*, a finalist for the Wandering Aengus Book Award, was published in 2024 by Broadstone Books. He is the author of two previous collections — *The Sovereignty of the Accidental* (2018) and *Adrift* (2023). His poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals and has won awards from various arts organizations, including the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. In 2024, he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He is also the author of *Against the Current*, a book on inner-city education, and writes often on issues related to school and learning. More at [www.michaelabrosnan.com](http://www.michaelabrosnan.com).

Mary Buchinger, whose recent books include *Navigating the Reach* (Honors, 2024 Massachusetts Book Award, Salmon Poetry), *The Book of Shores*, and *Virology* (Lily Poetry Review Books), is the winner of the 2024 Elyse Wolf/Slate Roof Chapbook Prize. She teaches at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Boston.

**Lorraine Caputo:** Wandering troubadour Lorraine Caputo is a documentary poet, translator and travel writer. Her works appear in over 500 journals on six continents; and 24 collections of poetry – including *In the Jaguar Valley* (dancing girl press, 2023) and *Santa Marta Ayres* (Origami Poems Project, 2024). She also authors travel narratives, articles and guidebooks. Her writing has been honored by the Parliamentary Poet Laureate of Canada (2011), and nominated for the Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize. She journeys through Latin America with her faithful knapsack Rocinante, listening to the voices of the *pueblos* and Earth. Follow her travels at: [www.facebook.com/lorrainecaputo.wanderer](https://www.facebook.com/lorrainecaputo.wanderer) or <https://latina-mericawanderer.wordpress.com>.

**Ruth Chad** is a psychologist who lives and works in the Boston area. Her poems have appeared in the Aurean, Constellations, Ibbetson Street, Muddy River Poetry Review, Lily Poetry Review, Amethyst Poetry Review, Writing in a Woman's Voice, and others. Her chapbook, "The Sound of Angels", was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2017 and her book, "In the Absence of Birds", was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2024. Ruth was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2021.

**Llyn Clague** lives in Sleepy Hollow, NY. His poems have been published widely, including in *Ibbetson Street*, *Atlanta Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Main Street Rag*, *New York Quarterly*, and other magazines. His ninth book, *Coming Of Age*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2023. Visit [www.llynclague.com](http://www.llynclague.com)

**Charles Coe** is the author of five books of poetry: *All Sins Forgiven: Poems for my Parents*, *Picnic on the Moon*, *Memento Mori*, and the recently released *Purgatory Road*, all published by Leapfrog Press. He is also author of *Spin Cycles*, a novella published by Gemma Media. Charles is adjunct professor of English at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, where he teaches in the Master of Fine Arts writing program.

**Tanya Contos** is a Boston-based writer whose poetry and nonfiction have appeared in numerous periodicals and in the collection *The Tide Clock and Other Poems* (Somerset Hall Press). She is also an award-winning playwright. She has lived on both sides of the Atlantic, speaks five languages and sings in several more.

**Judy Brackett Crowe** lives in the California foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared in *Oberon*, *Fish Anthology*, *California Fire & Water*, *Epoch*, *The Maine Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Commonweal*, *Midwest Review*, *Cloudbank*, *Subtropics*, and elsewhere.. Her poetry chapbook, *Flat Water: Nebraska Poems*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Her poetry book, *The Watching Sky*, was published by Cornerstone Press in January 2024.

**Dennis Daly** has published eleven books of poetry and poetic translations. His most recent books are *Psalms Composed in Utter Darkness* (Dos Madres, 2023) and *Odd Man Out* (MadHat Press, 2024). Please see Daly's blog site, *Weights and Measures*, at [dennisfdaly.blogspot.com](http://dennisfdaly.blogspot.com).

**Susan Donnelly's** newest poetry collection is *The Maureen Papers and Other Poems*. The author of *Capture the Flag*, *Transit*, *Eve Names the Animals*, and six chapbooks, she has published in many journals, anthologies, textbooks, and online. Her work is included in *Poets Meet Politics*, an anthology published in 2022 by Hungry Hill Writing of Cork, Ireland. Susan offers poetry classes and individual consultations from her home in Arlington, Massachusetts.

**W. D. Ehrhart** is both a Marine Corps veteran of the American War in Vietnam and a veteran of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. His most recent collections are *Thank You for Your Service: Collected Poems* (McFarland, 2019) and *At Smedley Butler's Grave* (Moonstone Arts, 2023).

**Mark Fleckenstein:** Six states, a B.A. in English and a MFA in Writing later, Mark Fleckenstein settled in Massachusetts. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, he's published 6 books of poetry and 5 chapbooks

**Harris Gardner:** *Chalice of Eros* co-authored with Lainie Senechal); the second book *No Time for Death*, published February, 2022; 2 chapbooks: *Lest They Become* (2003) and *Among Us* (2007) Sixty credits. Poetry Editor, Ibbetson Street: 2010 to present; co-founder: Tapestry of Voices and Boston National Poetry Month Festival with Lainie Senechal. (2001-2021); Recipient of Ibbetson Street Life Time Achievement Award-2015. Citation from Massachusetts House of Representatives-2015. Recipient of the Sam Cornish Award from New England Poetry Club June 25, 2023.

**Danielle Legros Georges** is a poet, translator, and editor whose books include *The Dear Remote Nearness of You* (2016); *Island Heart*, translations of the Haitian-French poet Ida Faubert (2021); *Wheatley at 250: Black Women Poets Re-imagine the Verse of Phillis Wheatley Peters* (2023); *Blue Flare: Three Haitian Poets*, translations (2024); and *Three Leaves, Three Roots: Poems on the Haiti-Congo Story* (Beacon Press, 2025). She is the former Poet Laureate of Boston, and a Professor Emerita of creative writing at Lesley University.

**Myles Gordon** is a writer and teacher near Boston. He has published two chapbooks: *Until It Does Us In*, Cervena Barva; *In Between the Charges*, Broadstone Books, and the full length collection, *Inside The Splintered Wood*, which was a finalist for the Mass. Book Award.

**Ruth Holzer** is the author of eight chapbooks, most recently, “*Home and Away*” (dancing girl press) and “*Living in Laconia*” (Gyroscope Press). Her poems have appeared in *Blue Unicorn*, *Freshwater*, *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *POEM*, and previously in *Ibbetson Street*. A multiple Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, among her awards are the *Edgar Allan Poe Memorial Prize*, the *Tanka Splendor Award* and the *Ito En Art of Haiku Contest Grand Prize*.

**Robert K. Johnson**, Now retired, former Professor of English, taught at Suffolk University for many years. For eight years, he was also Poetry Editor of *Ibbetson Street magazine*. His poems have been published in a variety of magazines here and abroad. His most recent full length collections of poems are *From Mist To Shadow* and *Winterberries*.

**Karen Klein:** After retiring Emerita from Brandeis University Faculty, Karen Klein, returned to her creative activities: contemporary modern dance performances (Prometheus Elders, ATAD, teXtmoVes), visual art production, haiku and contemporary lyric publications. Her first book, *This Close* (Ibbetson Press, 2022); her chapbook *Embodied*, forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

**Ted Kooser's** most recent collection of poems is *Raft*, from Copper Canyon Press. Two books by Ted will be out early in 2025, a collection of his interviews from University Press of Mississippi and a children's book from Candlewick Press.

**E Kraft** is a poetry editor whose poems have been nominated for the 2024 Pushcart Prize and published by *The Hanging Loose Press*, *The National Poetry Quarterly*, and others. She is grateful for everyone who has read her poems or attended her readings including her favorite dog from the local shelter.

**Miriam Levine** is the author of *Forget about Sleep*, her sixth poetry collection, winner of the 2023 *Laura Boss Narrative Poetry Award*. Another collection, *The Dark Opens*, won the *Autumn House Poetry Prize*. Other books include: *Devotion*, a memoir; *In Paterson*, a novel. She lives in Florida and New Hampshire. For more information about her work, please go to [miriamlevine.com](http://miriamlevine.com).

**Miriam Manglani** lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with her husband and three children. She graduated with a degree in English from Brandeis University and works full-time as a Technical Training Manager. Her poems have been published in various magazines and journals including *Sparks of Calliope*, *Red Eft Review*, *One Art*, *Glacial Hills Review*, and *Paterson Literary Review*. Her poetry chapbook, *Ordinary Wonders*, was published by Prolific Press and her poetry book manuscript, *Invisible Lines*, was recently accepted for publication by Kelsay Books.

**Ed Meek** is the author of four books of poetry and a collection of short stories. His most recent book is *High Tide*. He has had poems in *Plume*, *The Sun*, *The Baltimore Review*. He writes book reviews for *The Arts Fuse*.

**Gary Metras's** ninth book of poems, *Marble Dust*, was published spring 2024 by Cervena Barva Press. His poems have been published in hundreds of journals including *Ibbetson Street* (Massachusetts), *Istanbul Literary Review* (Turkey), *Poetry* (Chicago), *Poetry Salzburg Review* (Austria), and *Tears in the Fence* (UK).

**Peter Mladinic's** most recent books of poems are *Files of Information on People on People Who Don't Exist*, available from BlazeVOX books; and *Maiden Rock*, from the Uncollected Press. He is a professor emeritus at New Mexico Junior College and an animal rights advocate. A native of New Jersey, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico, where he enjoying reading and spending time with his six rescue dogs.

**Ryan Clinesmith Montalvo's** manuscript *Epilogue to Paradise* was a *Letras Latinas-ILS/ND- Andres Montoya Poetry Prize* Finalist, 2024 Akron Poetry Prize Finalist, Codhill Press Book Prize Finalist, C&R Press 2022 Poetry Award Longlist, and an honorable mention in the Southern Collective Latin American Chapbook Competition. A MVICW Poet & Author Fellow, and the winner of the Shandy Hill Essay Contest. Ryan holds an Ed.M. from Harvard Graduate School of Education, an M.F.A. in poetry from Hunter College, and a B.F.A. in Poetry and Literature from Emerson College. Ryan's poetry has been published in *Ibbetson Street Press*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Indolent Books*, and elsewhere.

**Ellie O'Leary** is the author of *Breathe Here* (poetry, 2020) and *Up Home Again* (memoir, 2023) both with North Country Press. She teaches in or facilitates two writing programs at Pyramid Life Center in the Adirondacks, is Education Director of the Gloucester Writers Center, curates the Freedom Maine Summer Reading Series and is Poet Laureate Emerita of Amesbury, Massachusetts where she also serves on the Amesbury Cultural Council.

**Tomas O'Leary:** poet, translator, music-maker, singer, artist, expressive therapist. His *New & Selected Poems* from Lynx House Press: "*In the Wellspring of the Ear.*" Previous books of poetry: "*Fool at the Funeral,*" "*The Devil Take a Crooked House,*" & "*A Prayer for Everyone.*" A teacher for many years — (college, high school, elementary, adult ed) — he also worked for decades with folks who have Alzheimer's, playing Irish accordion and eliciting cognitive and emotional responses through songs, stories, poems, & free-wheeling conversation.

**Chad Parenteau** hosts Boston's long-running Stone Soup Poetry series. His latest collections are *Love Lines* and *Cant Republic: Erasures and Blackouts*. His work has appeared in journals such as *Résonancee*, *Molecule*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Pocket Lint*, *Cape Cod Poetry Review*, *Tell-Tale Inklings*, *Off The Coast*, *The Skinny Poetry Journal*, *The New Verse News*, *dadakuku*, *Nixes Mate Review* and *The Ugly Monster*. He has also been published in anthologies such as *French Connections*, *Sounds of Wind*, *Reimagine America*, and *The Vagabond Lunar Collection*. He serves as Associate Editor of the online journal *Oddball Magazine*.

**Marge Piercy** has published 20 poetry collections, most recently, *ON THE WAY OUT, TURN OFF THE LIGHT* [Knopf]; 17 novels including *SEX WARS*. PM Press reissued *VIDA, DANCE THE EAGLE TO SLEEP*; they brought out short stories *THE COST OF LUNCH, ETC* and *MY BODY, MY LIFE* [essays, poems]. She has read at over 575 venues here and abroad.

**Denise Provost** has published two poetry collections, and in *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River*, *qarrtsiluni*, *Poetry Porch*, *Constellations*, and *Light Quarterly*. Twice Pushcart-nominated, Provost won *Best Love Sonnet* in the 2012 *Maria C. Faust Sonnet Competition*; the 2021 *Samuel Washington Allen Prize* and was elected co-president of the New England Poetry Club.

**Zara Raab** is a formalist poet who joins with the *Powow River Poets* north of Boston in keeping the craft and practice of poetry alive. Her most recent book is a new edition, expanded edition of *Swimming the Eel*, poems drawn from rural life.

**Hilary Sallick** is the author of *Love Is a Shore* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2023), long-listed for the 2024 Massachusetts Book Award; and *Asking the Form* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020). Her poems appear in *Permafrost*, *Potomac Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, and elsewhere. She served as vice-president of the New England Poetry Club from 2016 through 2024. A teacher with a longtime focus on adult literacy, she lives in Somerville, MA. ([www.hilarysallick.com](http://www.hilarysallick.com))

**David Sapp**, writer and artist, lives along the southern shore of Lake Erie in North America. A Pushcart nominee, he was awarded Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Grants for poetry and the visual arts. His poetry and prose appear widely in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. His publications include articles in the *Journal of Creative Behavior*; chapbooks *Close to Home* and *Two Buddha*, a novel *Flying Over Erie*, and a book of poems and drawings titled *Drawing Nirvana*.

**Fran Schumer's** poetry, fiction, and articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The North American Review*, and other publications. She won a *Goodman Loan Grant Award* for Fiction from the City University of New York and in 2021, a *Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing poetry fellowship*. Her first chapbook, *Weight*, was published in 2022. Recent poems have appeared in *Autumn Sky*, *One Art*, *Paterson Literary Review* and elsewhere.

**Carla Schwartz's** poems have appeared in *The Practicing Poet* and her collections *Signs of Marriage*, *Mother*, *One More Thing*, and *Intimacy with the Wind*. Learn more at <https://carlapoet.com>, or on all social media @cb99videos. Recent/upcoming curations: *Banyan Review*, *Cutthroat*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *Inquisitive Eater*, *Modern Haiku*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *New-Verse News*, *Spank the Carp*, and *The MacGuffin*. Carla Schwartz received the *New England Poetry Club E.E. Cummings Prize*.

**Claire Scott** is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in *the Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review* and *Healing Muse* among other journals. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called and Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

**Zvi A. Sesling**, Brookline, MA Poet Laureate 2017-2020. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review* is author of four poetry books and three poetry chapbooks. His *Selected and New Poetry* will be published by Big Table Publishing.

**Allen Seward** is a poet from the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. His work has appeared in *Scapegoat Review*, *Spare Parts Lit*, and *The Cawnpore*, among others. He currently resides in WV with his partner and four cats. @AllenSeward1 on Twitter, @allenseward0 on Instagram

This is **Eric Silverman's** third poem published in Ibbetson Street Press, for which he is insufficiently grateful. He is at work on a full-length fiction about an elite athlete confronting her own mortality.

**William Snyder** has published poems in *Atlanta Review*, *Poet Lore*, and *Southern Humanities Review* among others. He was the co-winner of the 2001 Grolier Poetry Prize; winner of the 2002 Kinloch Rivers Chapbook competition; The CONSEQUENCE Prize in Poetry, 2013; the 2015 Claire Keyes Poetry Prize; Tulip Tree Publishing *Stories That Need To Be Told* 2019 Merit Prize for Humor; and Encircle Publications 2019 Chapbook Contest. He retired from teaching writing and literature at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN. in 2021.

**Priscilla Turner Spada's** poems and artwork are in numerous publications, including many *Ibbetson St.* issues; *Merrimac Mic* anthologies; *Quill & Parchment* online mags; and Lark Books. She has a chapbook *Light in Unopened Windows*. She is a *Powow River Poet* and has read at many regional venues, including The Actor's Studio, Newburyport, MA for HERSTORY month; April Poetry Month at Bunker Hill Community College; Lawrence International Book Fair; J.G. Whittier Home, Amesbury, MA; and Rockport Poetry Fest, where her poetry and artwork have won ekphrastic poetry prizes.

**Michael Todd Steffen's** second book of poems, *On Earth As It Is*, was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2022. Joan Houlihan has noted the collection's intimate portraits, sense of history, surprising wit and the play of dark and light...the striking combination of the everyday and the transcendent.

**Deborah Szabo:** A native New Yorker who dreamt of becoming Joan Baez. Deborah Szabo instead became a high school English and Creative Writing teacher. Following her tenure in Boston Public Schools during the chaotic years of desegregation, she landed at Newburyport High School, where she has continued her over 50-year career. She loves helping teenagers discover their voices and shares their general irreverence.

**Ann Christine Tabaka** was nominated for the 2017 & 2023 Pushcart Prize in Poetry; nominated for the 2023 Dwarf Stars award of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association; winner of Spillwords Press 2020 Publication of the Year; featured in the "Who's Who of Emerging Writers" 2020 and 2021. Selected as a Judge for the Soundwaves Poetry Contest of Northern Ireland 2023. She is the author of 17 poetry books, and 1 short story book.

**Jeffery Allen Tobin** is a political scientist and researcher based in South Florida. His extensive body of work primarily explores U.S. foreign policy, democracy, national security, and migration. He has been writing poetry and prose for more than 30 years. His publications include *The Gilded Weathervane*, *Humana Obscura*, *The Lake Poetry*, *Loud Coffee Press*, *North of Oxford*, *October Hill Magazine*, *Passionfruit Review*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *The Raven Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Superpresent Magazine*, *Writer's Digest*, *Written Tales*, and others.

**Keith Tornheim** has six recent books, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; *I Am Lilith*, *Dancer on the Wind*; *Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*; *Fireflies*; *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.

**Paulette Demers Turco** pairs her art and poetry in *Shimmer*, an ekphrastic poetry collection (Kelsay Books, 2023). She is co-organizer and host of Powow Poetry monthly readings and editor of *The Powow River Poets Anthology II* (Able Muse Press, 2021). Her chapbook *In Silence* was released by Finishing Line Press (2018) and her poetry appears in *The Lyric*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Quill & Parchment*, *Pulsebeat Poetry Journal*, and others. Awards include the Robert Frost Poetry Award, a commendation for the 2020 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine, two Rockport Poetry Festival Ekphrastic Poetry Awards.

**Theodore Wachs** grew up in the Chicago area and graduated from Wabash College. He has had careers as a teacher, editor, and translator in Switzerland. Poetry has been a life-long hobby. Early inspiration came from Wallace Stevens, W.H. Auden and Philip Larkin; more recent influences include Mary Oliver, Rita Dove and Andrea Cohen. His imagination is engaged by themes of love and loss, faith (or lack of it), creative genius, and mysteries of the natural world.

**Joyce Wilson** is editor of *The Poetry Porch* ([www.poetryporch.com](http://www.poetryporch.com)), a literary magazine on the Internet since 1997. Her poems have appeared in many literary journals, among them *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Hudson Review*, and *Poetry Ireland*. Her chapbook *The Need for a Bridge* and a full-length collection *Take and Receive* were both published in 2019. A sequence of poems “*The Octagonal Schoolhouse*” won the Samuel Washington Allen Honorable Mention Prize from the New England Poetry Club in 2023.

**Elizabeth S. Wolf** has published 5 books of poetry. Her chapbook *Did You Know?* was a 2018 Rattle Prize winner. Elizabeth's poetry appears in multiple journals and anthologies and has received 4 Pushcart nominations. Rattle Summer 2022 featured her project with Prisoner Express. In 2023 Elizabeth taped readings at the White House, Supreme Court, and US Capitol as part of The Scheherazade Project. Selected works are included in the *Lunar Codex Nova Collection* that landed on the moon in Feb 2024. Her video poem *April 1999* was screened at the Poetry in Motion Festival 2024 in Colorado.

